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SOURCE Newspapers as indicated.

SHIPS REACH SIBERIAN RIVER BASINS BY NORTHERN SEA ROUTE

[Numbers in parentheses refer to the appended list of sources.]

The steamships, Diesel ships, and barges making up the Arctic Expedition which completed the voyage from Arkhangel'sk to the Ob', Irtysh, and Yenisey river basins by the northern sea route were built in the center of the USSR (1) and were brought by rivers, lakes, and canals to the White Sea (2). Some ships travelled about 2,000 kilometers on the Volga, through the Rybinsk reservoir, the Mariinskaya Water Route System, Lake Onega, and the White Sea-Baltic Canal (3). The goal of the expedition was to reinforce the Siberian basin river fleets. Formerly, ships had been delivered, dismantled, by railroad, and assembly had been required over 2 or 3 years (4). Transfer of the ships by sea was only one tenth as expensive as shipping them dismantled by railroad (5).

The expedition was assembled at Arkhangel'sk. Fedor Vasil'yevich Nayanov was named head of the expedition (4) K. G. Stepanenko was named deputy head (3) and Flor Porfir'yevich Demidov, a captain of the Yenisey River Basin, was put in charge of navigation for the voyage (4). Almost all the administrations of the Ministry of River Fleet USSR assisted in the planning (5).

The ships were new (5) and their crews were made up of the best river-fleet workers of the Western Siberian, Lower Irtysh, Yenisey (6) and Ob' fleets, and were given special training (5). Many women took part in the expedition as radio operators, sailors, and cooks (2).

June and July were the period of preparation. Since the river ships were not sufficiently durable for navigation in ocean waters, the hulls were reinforced by binding them with heavy zinc tow ropes. The portholes were welded up (5).

Some of the Diesel ships were built at the "Krasnoye Sormovo" Plant. Those for which a Stalin Prize was recently awarded proved good both on rivers and at sea (3). [According to Pravda, 9 April 1949, a group of engineers and a designer of the "Krasnoye Sormovo" Plant received a 1948 Stalin Prize for creating new types of river craft

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50X1-HUM

The ships were loaded with supplies and fuel (1). Fats and vegetables were included, and live deer were taken along for fresh meat. There were no cases of sickness during the voyage (2).

Travelling in three columns (5) the expedition moved from the mouth of the Severnaya Dvina River to Chernaya Bashnya, around Kanin Nos Peninsula, past Kolguyev Island (1) to Yugorskiy Shar. As far as Yugorskiy Shar the weather did not hinder navigation much; there were occasional strong winds (5). In the Barents Sea there were waves as high as a two-story building.

The expedition was obliged to stop for 16 days at the Bight of Varnek (1) in Yugorskiy Shar (5) near Vaygach Island (7) because the Kara Sea was blocked with ice. Since the ships had no water distillers, the opportunity was used to take on fresh water from a series of small lakes on Vaygach Island. Between these lakes 4 kilometers of connecting canals were dug (5) to create a reservoir and collect the water near the anchorage (7). The water was taken on board the ships through slightly under 400 meters of hose.

During the layover, divers inspected the hulls and propellors of the ships and did repair work. The Diesel ships were fueled by an accompanying tanker.

The ice obstruction in the Kara Sea lasted for 2 weeks, and then the situation improved, although not as much as might have been desired (5). Fog was encountered in the Kara Sea, and on the second day after leaving Yugorskiy Shar, in connection with a change in the wind direction, the ships got into difficulties with the ice and were obliged to drift for 15 hours (7) with shortened towlines (5) in ice one meter thick until the fog cleared. Another source (5) gives 12 hours as the time the ships were obliged to drift. An 8-ball northern cyclone was encountered at Belyy Ostrov and all ships were taken into Proliv Malygina (7). A 10-ball storm was encountered in Obskaya Guba (2).

During the last stage of the voyage the expedition was met and aided by the steam tug Kutuzov (captain, Ban'kov) from the Lower Irtysh. Finally the ships were divided into two groups and sent to the mouths of the Yenisey and Ob' rivers (5). The ships reached their destinations 1 September 1949 without loss or damage (1).

During the voyage the expedition travelled more than 6,000 kilometers, of which 3,400 were by sea (4). The voyage was made without the aid of ice breakers. Some 5-ball ice was encountered. All powered vessels towed nonpowered vessels. The expedition had signalling and ship-to-ship radio communication (5) as well as radio communication with shore. Information on ice conditions and weather was received from the Main Administration of the Northern Sea Route and the Ministry of River Fleet (7).

There were no cases of the Diesel motors "turning sour" during the voyage (2).

The ships will be used to transport grain, timber, industrial goods, etc. (4). Some of the ships including the Diesel ship Lyubov' Shevtsova and the Diesel ship Viktor Talalikhin, have already been put into service. Others are undergoing preventive repair at Salekhard (5).

SOURCES

1. Pionerskaya Pravda, 20 Sep 49

2. Rechnoy Transport, 16 Sep 49

3. Rechnoy Transport, 27 Sep 49

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4. Komsomol'skaya Pravda, 10 Sep 49
5. Rechnoy Transport, 13 Sep 49
6. Zarya Vostoka, 18 Sep 49
7. Trud, 14 Sep 49

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